

USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Three Rivers Resource Area, Burns District
Hines, OR 97738

Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Egli Ridge Guzzler
Environmental Assessment
OR-025-03-070

INTRODUCTION:

Egli Ridge is located approximately 40 miles southwest of Burns, Oregon, in the East Wagonfire Allotment. Egli Ridge offers abundant forage but very limited water. The area lacks water from July through October in most years. Elk herds in the vicinity have been expanding their range and increasing in size. Current big game distribution in the East Wagonfire Allotment is primarily concentrated around areas with reliable water. Egli Ridge is already getting big game (deer, antelope, and elk) use, but use of the area is limited to times when water is available. When water becomes deficient on Egli Ridge most of the wildlife using the area migrate to Wagonfire Mountain, which is mainly private land. The proposal is to install a guzzler (T. 26 S., R. 25 E., Section 6, SE¼), to supply wildlife with a reliable year-round water source. This would improve wildlife habitat and distribution on the East Wagonfire Allotment.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed action is to construct a guzzler complex consisting of two 10-foot by 30-foot water collection aprons, two brown 1,800-gallon tanks with the drinkers attached, and pipe connecting the aprons and the tanks. The guzzler complex would then be fenced to prevent livestock use. The total project area is approximately one-half acre in size. Overall surface disturbance would be minimal, as heavy equipment would be used only to bury the tanks and plumbing. The risk of noxious weed expansion would be minimized by ensuring equipment is clean prior to entry into the site, minimizing human disturbance, and follow-up inspections to ensure no new noxious weed establishment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

This proposal is in conformance with objectives and land use plan allocations in the 1992 Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP). Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and all other information, I have determined that the proposal and alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Rationale:

This determination is based on the following: All potentially impacted resources were analyzed in the EA specific to the proposed action. The following resources were analyzed in the EA: cultural heritage, migratory birds, wildlife, vegetation, livestock management, recreation, and visual resources. Impacts to these resources are considered nonsignificant (based on the definition of significance in 40 CFR 1508.27) for the following reasons:

Cultural Heritage: Cultural surveys were completed in June of 2003, and one site was recorded adjacent to the project area. The proposed action would have no known impacts on cultural heritage as the only recorded site would be totally avoided.

Migratory Birds: The proposed action would improve the habitat for all the migratory birds that use this area. First, it would provide a water resource for the birds. In addition, it is expected to increase the abundance and distribution of many of the species on which these birds prey including invertebrates, small mammals, and other small birds. Direct impacts to migratory birds occurring from installation of the guzzler would be minimized by installing it in the fall, thereby avoiding nesting and fledging season.

Special Status Flora and Vegetation: The proposed action lies within shrub-steppe and juniper woodland plant communities, the most common types in southeastern Oregon. Botanical clearances on the project area were completed in June of 2003. No Federally listed Threatened or Endangered plants were recorded. No Special Status Plant species were recorded as well. The amount of disturbance would be minimal. Approximately 1,000 square feet of vegetation would be displaced by the guzzler complex. The vegetation is also likely to have an increase in grazing use from native herbivores. However, this increased use would not negatively impact native plant communities.

Wildlife: The proposed action would benefit big game in the area by giving them a reliable year-round water source. This would allow these species to take advantage of the area's abundant forage during the dry summer and fall months. Small mammals and songbirds would also benefit from the water provided by the guzzler. Raptors and other predatory animals are likely to benefit indirectly through larger and more dependable prey populations.

Livestock Management: The project area lies within the Egli Ridge Pasture of the East Wagontire Allotment. The Egli Ridge Pasture is over 5,200 acres in size. The proposed action would have minimal impacts on livestock management. Approximately one-half acre of the pasture would be excluded from cattle. It is likely that there would be some competition for forage between cattle and wildlife with the anticipated increase in big game use. However, to reduce the possibility of competition the guzzler complex would be located in an area of the pasture that receives little cattle grazing due to the area's distance from water.

Recreation: Under the proposed action, recreational opportunities are likely to increase in the area. Due to the availability of water big game as well as an array of wildlife species would increase use in the Egli Ridge area. Overall, big game hunting opportunities should improve with the increase of habitat use on public land.

Visual Resources: The project area is remote and not visible from any highway or main road. The project area falls entirely within the Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III. The proposed action meets the objectives of this VRM class.

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Date